

# CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES



## Child Support Awareness Month

*"Putting children first to ensure a brighter tomorrow"*



## August is Child Support Awareness Month

The South Carolina Department of Social Services has recognized August as Child Support Awareness Month. This month is observed to help inform the public about child support and the services that are available to assist families in South Carolina. This is also a time to celebrate families who make a positive impact on the health and financial well-being of their children.

“August is an opportunity to draw attention to the need for both parents to provide support for their children. For many households, the receipt of child support is a critical source of income,” said SCDSS State Director Michael Leach.

Statistics show a middle-income, middle-class family who had a child in 2015 will spend \$284,570 to raise a child to adulthood. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that nearly 22 million children in the country have an absent parent in the home, and the poverty rate for these children is about three times higher than it is for children in households with both parents. The [Child Support Services Division](#) at SCDSS helps mitigate that in a number of ways.

In 2019, DSS launched the Palmetto Automated Child Support System (PACSS) to help parents better manage their cases. In March 2021, a new online customer portal was launched as part of PACSS where users can view latest payment information and any upcoming hearings, update personal information, make online payments, and have access to applications for services. Since its launch, the portal now has nearly 13,000 users accounting for 19,000 cases. There has been a total of 174,000 case inquiries during that time. Over \$340 million in child support was collected in the federal fiscal year 2020, an increase of 13% over the previous year, despite the pandemic and prolonged family court closures.

Another one of the DSS Child Support Program’s offerings is the [Visitation Involvement Parenting Program](#), also known as the V.I.P. Program. It operates in sixteen South Carolina counties. The program offers parenting classes, mediation, and help with establishing and enforcing orders.

More information on the programs and services available can be found [here](#). View Director Leach's [video message](#) and read a recent WSPA news story about Child Support in SC [here](#).

# **CHILD SUPPORT**

## **Customer Service Portal**



*A secure way for parents to access important information about their case. Parents will have access to view:*

- **Payment information**
- **Hearing dates**
- **Enforcement measures in place**
- **Announcements affecting their case**

*The Customer Service Portal can be used to update:*

- **Address, phone, email**
- **Employment information**

To access the portal, you will need to create a unique **USER ID** and **PASSWORD**.  
To get started, call 1-800-768-5858

**DSS**  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
DSS Policy #7620 (R) 1/11

**[clientportal.dss.sc.gov](http://clientportal.dss.sc.gov)**

# CHILD WELFARE SERVICES



## “Better Together” Through Teamwork

*SCDSS is focused on being **Better Together: Enhancing Practice, Transforming Lives**. We are committed to working within our agency, alongside our statewide network of partners and providers, with foster parents, the faith community and others, to achieve best outcomes for children and families. Here's a recent example of how this commitment is making a difference...*

Recently, a teen victim of sex trafficking who was placed in foster care needed extensive dental work done. The teen is a non-citizen and the process for paying for the work proved to be complicated. Through the efforts of multiple DSS team members, a payment method was worked out so the youth could receive the treatment she so badly needed. The case involved collaboration among the DSS trafficking unit, the statewide non-citizen advocate, our statewide dentist, and others to obtain needed documents and Medicaid eligibility.

Joyce Washington, with the Foster Case Division in York County, put it best when she said, “Oftentimes it seems like nothing is being done, or there does not seem to be help in sight. However, I can truly say that over the past few months, I have seen more teamwork/community than I have seen in some time. Just thinking about the last few months and all we have encountered together exemplifies who we are as an agency, as individuals, and collectively.”

Everyone worked diligently to ensure this child got the significant expert healthcare she needed...just one of many perfect examples of how we are truly **Better Together**!



## State Director's Angle Giving Thanks to Foster Parents

By State Director Michael Leach

DSS remains committed to the safety of our children as we work to manage around the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. I want to personally thank our foster parents, who have stayed the course during this scary and unpredictable time. Our children greatly depend on their love and the safety and security of their care. We cannot thank them enough for the sacrifices made. We have worked diligently to ensure our foster parents have received guidance, support, and as much up-to-date information as possible about the state's response.

One way that we have provided additional support is by issuing a temporary supplement beginning in April of 2020 to foster parents to address increased COVID-19 related needs. We are grateful to the General

Assembly for their approval to increase the SC foster parent regular board rates, making the supplemental payment permanent. Foster Parents will no longer receive a separate payment for the supplemental. The increased amount is now included in the regular board rate payment and the supplemental payment will no longer be received for regular foster care placements. The COVID supplemental payment for Therapeutic Foster Care placements will continue to be received through the end of the year.

We are seeing increases in the number of COVID positive test results. We encourage foster parents to continue following CDC and DHEC guidelines regarding mask guidelines. Children in foster care should be attending school in person whenever there is an option for in-person schooling unless approval has been received by DSS due to extenuating circumstances. All South Carolinians aged 12 and up are currently eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. Biological parents and the youth should be consulted regarding the youth receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

New Regulations for foster and adoptive homes go into effect on September 12, 2021. These changes will provide a more streamlined process so that foster and adoptive homes have the same requirements. The Child and Adult Information Portal (CAIP) is helping foster parents by providing a way to quickly access and look up important information including school records and health information. As of July 9, 2021, we have 178 user accounts with 166 Active accounts. We are also encouraging foster parents to complete training for the Child and Adult Information Portal. Once completed, they can log on to a secure website to view and update important information such as health care needs, provider information, immunization and school records, family adult and community connections, visitation and maintaining connections, and so much more.

Foster parents are also encouraged to complete the mandatory Healthcare Oversight and Psychotropic Medications training. We officially have more foster children placed in kinship care settings than in congregate care. However, the need for additional quality foster homes is great. Please help us in the effort to recruit more families to care for children experiencing foster care, especially teenagers and sibling groups. Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent can reach [Heartfelt Calling](#) at 888-828-3555. A link to my full video message can be found [here](#).

## ADULT ADVOCACY

Protection. Respect. Independence.



Click here to visit our  
website to learn more  
about Adult Protective  
Services



## New Law Offers More Protection to Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable adults in South Carolina have additional protection from financial exploitation and abuse thanks to bill S.425 signed on July 28th by Governor Henry McMaster.

DSS State Director Michael Leach was on hand for the signing. "The impact of vulnerable adult and elder abuse is felt by all of South Carolina's citizens, costing victims across the United States billions of dollars each year," said Director Leach. "We at DSS are aware of the challenges vulnerable adults face every day, and it is up to all of us to say something if we see abuse or neglect in our communities." To watch Director Leach's full comments, click [here](#).



The new law allows financial institutions such as banks, credit unions, and other financial service companies to decline, delay, or report transactions that are suspected of financially exploiting vulnerable adults or seniors aged 55 or older.

A [vulnerable adult](#) is defined as a person 18 years of age or older with a physical or mental condition, which substantially impairs that person from adequately providing their own care.

## ECONOMIC SERVICES

Family Assistance | Early Care & Education | Employment Services



Supplemental  
Nutrition  
Assistance  
Program

## Emergency SNAP Supplements Extended

The deadline has been extended for federally-funded emergency supplements for lower-income elderly, young, and at-risk South Carolinians who participate in the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#). The supplements were set to expire on August 1, 2021. South Carolinians who receive SNAP benefits will continue receiving the monthly supplement through the end of the year.

On July 28th, DSS State Director Michael Leach sent a letter to Governor Henry McMaster. In that letter, Director Leach requested authorization to seek the extension. "Approximately 295,000 households, representing 610,000 DSS clients, currently receive supplemental nutrition assistance in South Carolina from the federally-funded SNAP program," Director Leach said. "Emergency allotments (supplements), funded 100% by the federal government, have been provided to beneficiary households in South Carolina since the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020."

Director Leach continued: “While SNAP allotment amounts vary depending on household size, income, countable household expenses, and other federal eligibility requirements, the average emergency allotment for a household is an additional \$177 per month.”

In responding to Director Leach, Governor McMaster wrote: “Our moral and ethical duty during the COVID-19 pandemic is to protect the lives of the most vulnerable South Carolinians – our elderly, young, and at-risk population.”

To continue the emergency allocations, DSS submitted an Administrative Agency Declaration to the Food and Nutrition Services Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and received approval on July 29. The agency will renew its request with the USDA monthly through the end of the year. To see a copy of Director Leach’s letter and Governor McMaster’s response, click [here](#). The announcement of the extension received widespread media coverage. You can view some of the stories [WLTX](#) and [WSPA](#).

## SNAP E&T Program Leads to Self-Sufficiency

The [SNAP Employment and Training Program](#) provides training and employment opportunities to SNAP households to increase their income and lead to self-sufficiency. The program assists SNAP recipients who are unemployed or underemployed who may need help with improving their skills in order to obtain gainful employment. The training components offered are work readiness training, education, vocational training, job retention, workfare, and work experience.



The SNAP Employment and Training Program partners with various community-based organizations, state agencies, and technical colleges to provide the educational and vocational training necessary to assist SNAP participants in gaining the skills needed to qualify for in-demand jobs throughout South Carolina.

The Charles Lea Center located in Spartanburg is one of our partner agencies that have provided excellent opportunities for SNAP Employment and Training Program participants. To learn about some of the success stories from the partnership, click [here](#).

## Helping Individuals Achieve Stability through Employment

The [SCDSS Division of Employment Services](#) works to support business owners who hire **SNAP** (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and **TANF** (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program participants entering the workforce. When you hire our customers, you become eligible for a variety of benefits, incentives and supports designed to meet your specific needs. Hiring through DSS Employment Services programs can provide both your business and your new employee a promising future. We assist with:

- Tax credit opportunities for employers
- Workforce Consultants statewide
- Vocational assessments
- Pre-screened job referrals
- Background screening
- Ongoing assistance



Click here to view a [video](#) about how our partnership with Homes of Hope in Greenville, SC is changing lives!

## Federal Grant Supports DHEC Program for Lead Testing at Qualifying Schools, Day Care

The [South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control \(DHEC\)](#) is the recipient of

the WIIN grant, from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement a "Lead Testing in School and Child Care Program Drinking Water Program." The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) is excited to partner with DHEC in the implementation of this grant. The united goal of this program is to protect and promote the health and well-being of children, who are among the most vulnerable to the health effects of lead exposure.

Start [here](#) to enroll in this voluntary program by completing the Lead Testing Facility Survey. After completing the survey, DHEC will contact participants to schedule a virtual visit to determine where water sampling should be conducted.

You can visit the WIIN Grant website [here](#) for a wealth of information about the lead testing program, FAQ videos, as well as resources for learning more about lead, its impact on children, EPA's 3T's program, and more.



## Support Available for Parents and Child Care Providers

The SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education continues to offer financial assistance for child care for working families that have income at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. Information and an application for parents can be found on [www.scchildcare.org](http://www.scchildcare.org) under News and Announcements.

# Disaster Services & Emergency Management





## Making Recovery Plans Before a Storm Strikes

By Jim Casserly, Deputy Director of Disaster Services, Emergency Management

Shelter transition begins the day the evacuee signs in. The client's needs are continually being assessed to ensure a smooth transition back to life as it was prior to the event. Recovery begins as soon as the event is over. Evacuees are either able to move back home or into a transition shelter. This is where the MASTT (Multi-Agency Shelter Transition Teams) kicks in. This is a group of volunteer organizations and state and county organizations that join together to find the appropriate resources to assist citizens in getting needed services or a long-term housing solution if their homes are damaged.

The Day of Recovery meeting on July 20th at the Philips Market Center in West Columbia covered types of assistance available from the government. [SCDSS Disaster Services](#) staff shared our agency's integral role as a member of the MASTT. County offices in the Upstate and Lowcountry were integral members of the MASTT during the tornado outbreak in April of 2020. They helped find housing for displaced individuals through their knowledge of local organizations. Continue to watch for more updates throughout the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season.



## Disaster Services Update: Atlantic Hurricane Season Picks Up

The 2021 Atlantic Hurricane Season continues to pick up. In recent weeks, we have seen multiple storms develop. While it did not cause significant damage here, Tropical Depression Fred dumped heavy rain on parts of our state and just last week, the state experienced several confirmed tornadoes. The months of August and September are typically the busiest time of the year for storms, so we must closely monitor any developments and forecast tracks.

During the August 5th virtual Hurricane Task Force meeting, a number of topics were discussed including mandatory medical evacuations, an update on operations support, a recap of Tropical Storm Elsa, and sheltering needs.

If and when emergency shelters open, DSS team members help in several ways, including signing in evacuees and assigning them to a cot. The [American Red Cross](#) recently announced masks will be required in shelters this year for their staff and volunteers. Masks are highly recommended for DSS personnel and clients as well. This also includes those who are fully vaccinated. Masks will be provided at the door of shelters, but vaccinations will not be required. The next task force meeting is scheduled for November 4th.

# SCDSS Professional Highlights





## DSS Recognizes August Employees of the Month

On August 19th, seven DSS professionals were recognized by Director Michael Leach as Employees of the Month.

Recognized for their hard work and leading with *Competence, Courage, and Compassion* for August are Greg Jansen, Accountability and Data Research, State Office; Alexis Logan, Adult Advocacy Services, Edgefield/ McCormick Counties; Jean LaBorde, Child Support Services, Columbia; Melinda Atkinson, Economic Services, Oconee County; Brenda Lockhart, Office of Inspector General, State Office; Dr. Rita Melton, Child Welfare Services, Columbia; and Lara Harrill, Legal Services, Spartanburg County.

The recognition celebration with Director Leach was held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. Each honoree has the use of a designated parking space for the entire month. They also received a DSS lapel pin, a gift card donated by A Home for Me to be used to purchase lunch, and an announcement sent to their local newspaper. Congratulations!



## Legal Conference Tackles Child Welfare

A group of attorneys recently attended the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) conference. The event took place August 13th-15th in Denver, Colorado. The theme this year was "From Crisis to Innovation: Toward a Family-Centered Justice System." The top leaders in child welfare came together for information-sharing and dialogue.

It was the NACC's 44th national child welfare law conference. The in-person conference was followed by an online conference on August 16th-18th.



## Amazing Grace Park Opens

Andrea James-Favor, Pee Dee Regional Director for SCDSS, was among those who recently celebrated the grand opening and dedication of the [Amazing Grace Park](#) in Marion, SC, which honors the late Reverend Senator Clementa Pinckney who was one of nine people murdered at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston in June 2015.

The park features walking trails, educational playgrounds, and musical instruments for all to play.



Shown in the picture above are Representative Lucas Atkinson, Senator Gerald Malloy, Andrea Favor (DSS Pee Dee Regional Director), and Senator Kent Williams. Governor Henry McMaster was also in attendance.

# Partner & Community Spotlights



## New Resource for Families of People with Disabilities

The employment gap between those with disabilities in South Carolina compared to those without is 42.2%. A new initiative aims to close the gap by encouraging families to empower their loved ones to meet their employment goals.

[Hire Me SC](#), powered by [Able SC](#) and the South Carolina Disability Employment Coalition, is a statewide workforce development campaign designed to increase employment among young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Recently, [a free online resource](#) was launched for families of people with disabilities.

It serves as a hub of employment information, including external resources, tips for families, empowering success stories, and more.

"Family often plays a significant role in the employment decisions made by a person with a disability, but a lack of knowledge and support can lead to family members compromising the freedom the individual has to make their own employment decisions," said Kimberly Tissot, president and chief executive officer of Able South Carolina. In addition to the Hire Me website, you can find more information by calling 800-681-7715 or e-mailing [hiremescc@able-sc.org](mailto:hiremescc@able-sc.org).





## Giving Thanks for Great Food

By Stephanie Gentry, Oconee County Director

[Fostering Faithfully](#) recently partnered with [Meat'n the Middle Food Truck](#) to serve the entire Oconee DSS office with lunch.

Staff members were able to choose from several menu items as well as drinks and dessert.

It was a generous gift and very much appreciated!

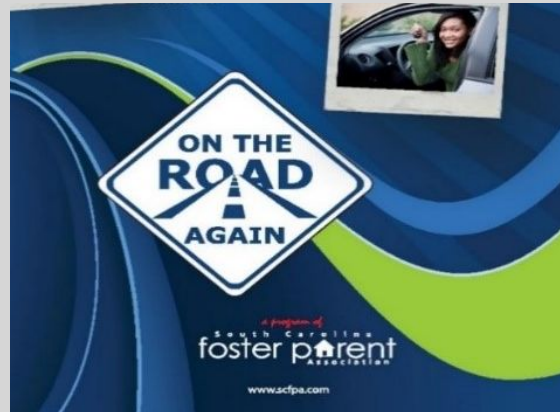


## On the Road Again

Do you have a used car or truck that you no longer need, but you do not think you can get much for it? Before you try to sell it or trade it in, why not consider donating it to help the [South Carolina Foster Parent Association](#)?

There is a desperate need for used vehicles and all cars donated to the ["On the Road Again" program](#) go to help deserving foster care youth.

Your donation could make a huge difference in the life of a young person who lacks transportation. They may be trying to get to school or work or need help to gain independence. To find out how you can make a lasting, positive impact, call Brian Marion at 803-665-9225.



## Helping Children with School Essentials

By Monita Dawkins, Cherokee County Director

I wanted to share with you the donation we receive from the [Concord Baptist Church](#) pastored by Dr. Michael Bridges.

They provided book bags with supplies and shoes for our children in foster care and family preservation. A big shout out also goes to the Cherokee County team for creating partnerships in the community.

In the picture are: FS Case Manager Derrick Wood, myself (Monita Dawkins), Family Preservation Case Manager Kami Pavlovic, and Family Preservation Supervisor Dawn Wood. Thank you, Concord Baptist Church!





## Elevation Riverwalk Continues to Support York DSS

By Laura Wasson, York County Director

The staff and congregation of [Elevation Riverwalk Church in Rock Hill](#) have continued to be a valuable community partner and support to York County DSS families and staff. Part of their five year strategic plan is to support the foster care program in York County. The church showed love to our staff, foster children and parents during the week of July 25<sup>th</sup> (their designated Love Week) in two distinct ways.

On July 25th, a DSS Block Party was held from 5-7 pm at their facility. Foster parents and children were the guests of honor and were treated to a carnival environment including cotton candy, shaved ice, popcorn, hot dogs, face painting, a jump house, balloon art, and other games. A catered meal from Cracker Barrel was also served to the attendees. It was beautiful to see so many smiling faces of the children, staff, volunteers, and foster parents at the event.

On July 30th, Love Week ended with a food truck/retro camper from [Rock Hill Coffee Roasters](#) that came onsite and provided hot and cold beverages to staff and delicious homemade donuts. At that event, they presented to York County a very generous donation to be used to support and enhance visitation and reunification efforts with our families and children. We are honored and humbled to have such generous support from Elevation.



# Report abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

**DSS**  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL SERVICES

## 1-888-CARE4US

**Click the red "Report Abuse" button to make an online report of suspected abuse and/or neglect, now!**



**Report Abuse**

*Reporters may remain anonymous or provide contact information to receive follow up on the outcome of their report.*



*Have a great  
Labor Day  
weekend!*

***DSS State Offices will be closed  
Monday, September 6th, 2021.***



SC Department of Social Services  
P.O. Box 1520  
Columbia, SC 29202-1520  
[www.DSS.sc.gov](http://www.DSS.sc.gov)



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